

December 6, 2011

Answers to Questions from Opponents of SB 619

1. Do you think children should be prevented from accessing public schools? If not, why is it okay to lock children out of the public online schools?

*****Virtual charter schools ARE public schools governed by authorizers and a non-profit school board. Virtual charter schools do NOT “lock” children out of public schools as they are a public school in every way. This includes highly qualified Michigan certified teachers, special education, college counseling, academic counseling, and rigid curriculum compliant with Michigan Merit curriculum standards.***

2. Do you believe children should have options in public education? Should parents have the freedom to choose?

*****Education choice for parents and students is a core fundamental right of everyone. SB 619 is a vital piece of legislation necessary toward allowing choice for ALL students in Michigan. Under the bill, the decision to attend a virtual school is a voluntary choice made by parents and students—not a mandate.***

3. Have you spoken with parents of kids in your district who are stuck on waiting list for online schools?

*****Due to current Michigan law, enrollment is capped at 1000 students for the 2 virtual charter schools. This enrollment cap has resulted in a wait list of over 5500 families for one of the current cyber charters, MVCA. Being “stuck” on a waiting list is an education opportunity deprived for a child for whom the brick-and- mortar system doesn’t work.***

4. Have you visited any students in online public schools, including kids who were bullied in regular schools and kids with autism or other special needs, who are thriving because of online public schools?

*****State law mandates that every public school, including virtual public charter schools, enroll students with special needs. In fact, virtual education works well for students with special needs as they can learn at their own pace while receiving the focused resources they require to succeed. MVCA has several special needs students whose parents publicly state that virtual school has been a godsend.***

5. Have you ever visited an online public school, spoken with the administrators or the schools’ certified-teachers?

*****Dozens of legislators have personally visited the 2 virtual charter schools this year. These visits have included conversations with teachers, students, and parents in which they’ve thoroughly explained the many positive aspects for virtual schools.***

6. Do you believe that every child should be educated in traditional brick and mortar school?

*****The decision now before the legislature is whether Michigan's education system will include true choice for parents and children. A vibrant education system does not mandate limited options for kids. Instead, the system must ensure student success by providing true choice between several quality education options—including virtual schools.***

7. Why do think parents are choosing charter schools and online public schools? Are districts prepared to provide the programs and services that online public schools are delivering?

*****Parents and students that have chosen virtual charter schools each have unique reasons for making their decision. These reasons include medical necessity, flexible schedules, gifted kids, and even Olympic training. Currently, many Michigan school districts and ISDs offer virtual education in various forms. However, current state law requires traditional brick-and-mortar schools to garner a waiver from the State Superintendent to operate a virtual program. Often times, this waiver forces districts into limited choices for a virtual provider partner.***

8. Do you have any evidence that Michigan's online public schools have hurt regular schools?

*****The real debate is whether limiting choice for parents and students hurts kids. Providing quality education options will lead to student academic growth and, ultimately, a stronger Michigan education system as a whole.***